



Supreme Court of Illinois

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PRINCIPALS IN COOK COUNTY JUSTICE SYSTEM TO TOUR MODEL WASHINGTON D.C. AREA COURTS

A task force of principal stakeholders summoned by the Illinois Supreme Court will be visiting Washington D.C. and Montgomery County, Maryland next week to study firsthand pretrial release and detention procedures in those courts as a way to enhance the administration of justice in Cook County and Illinois. The site visit is being coordinated with the assistance of the Washington-based Pretrial Justice Institute.

Those scheduled to make the trip are Cook County State's Atty. Anita Alvarez; Clerk Dorothy Brown of the Cook County Circuit Court; Cook County Public Defender A.C. Cunningham; Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans of Cook County Circuit Court; President Toni Preckwinkle of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County; Ret. Chief Justice Ben K. Miller of the Illinois Supreme Court; Ret. U.S. District Court Judge David Coar; and Director Michael Tardy of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

Those principals, as well as Sheriff Tom Dart of Cook County, were assembled by the Supreme Court last November for a continuing discussion on the systemic management of criminal pretrial matters, focusing on strategies to improve the effective administration of justice in Cook County and throughout Illinois.

The group has held several meetings. It has also reviewed the report of a detailed operational analysis of Cook County Pretrial Services operations, conducted by the Administrative Office and Director Tardy under the authority of the Supreme Court. The report contains 40 recommendations to improve pretrial services operations in Cook County, and the Administrative Office is working with the Circuit Court of Cook County and the principals to ensure their cooperation and commitment in implementing them. Justice Miller and Judge Coar, at the request of the Supreme Court, are acting as facilitators for the principals' meetings on these criminal justice matters.

MORE

Principals in Cook County Justice System to Tour D.C. Area Courts Add One

The courts in Washington D.C. and Montgomery County are considered models for effective pretrial systems that greatly aid in the justice process.

The group is scheduled to arrive Sunday evening in the Washington D.C. area.

The team of principals will review the pretrial process in Washington D.C. courts on Monday, beginning with an introduction and review of the process at 9 a.m. The principals will witness arraignment court and speak with the judge of that court. They will witness the interview process in pretrial operations and speak with the pretrial staff. Lunch is scheduled with judges. The afternoon will be devoted to witnessing another session of arraignment court and speaking with judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers and pretrial operations staff.

The team will motor to Montgomery County on Tuesday, witness court hearings, intake and pretrial interviews and speak with prosecutors, the public defender and pretrial staff.

The creation of the task force of principals dates to an invitation by the Illinois Supreme Court to the principals last October. It was motivated by the Supreme Court's own initiative to improve templates for the pretrial process throughout Illinois; a request by Chief Judge Evans' for more staff in Cook County pretrial operations which led to the operational analysis; and a letter to the Supreme Court by President Preckwinkle.

AOIC Director Tardy expressed his appreciation to the principals for the commitment of their time and energies to participate in the visit.

"In addition to first-hand observation and interaction with practitioners and policy-makers in Washington D.C., and in Maryland, the objective of the visit is to aid our Illinois team in the re-engineering of pretrial practices," Mr. Tardy said. "Our pretrial system needs to ensure that high-risk defendants are detained; that moderate risk defendants are released pending trial with accountable community supervision to mitigate their risk of failing to appear in court or engaging in new criminal conduct; and that low-risk defendants are released from custody pending trial as soon as practical."

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